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# rotary

DOWN UNDER

## DYLAN SMITH NZ'S NATIONAL SOAP BOX DERBY CHAMPION



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## The Greatest Amateur Racing Event in the World!

On Sunday, April 7, Dylan Smith from Orewa College, Auckland, became New Zealand's National Soap Box Derby Champion. Following his win Dylan went on to compete in the grand finals in Akron, Ohio, US, in July and has just returned after a "once-in-a-lifetime experience".



**Far left:** Air Corps competitors who also provided invaluable assistance on race days

**Left:** "Superkids" Soapbox – a second seat for kids with a disability

**Below:** Dylan Smith from Orewa College, Auckland, New Zealand's 2013 National Soap Box Derby Champion with his New Zealand trophies

It's been called "The Greatest Amateur Racing Event in the World", "The Gravity Grand Prix" and many other names, but to the Rotary Club of Whangaparaoa, NZ, and thousands of kids across the globe, it is known simply as the "Soap Box Derby". The event was inaugurated in 1933 in Dayton, Ohio, and has since become one of those traditional annual American spectacles.

Soap Box Derbies started in New Zealand 11 years ago with a council initiative in Northcote, supported by the local Rotary club. Terry Clarkson from the Rotary Club of Whangaparaoa became involved in the New Zealand organisation nine years ago as a member of the Waitakere Club. Today, a series of five area races take place each year with this year's grand final hosted by the Whangaparaoa club in Stanmore Bay, Auckland. The winner, 13-year-old Dylan Smith from Orewa College, drove one of 16 trolleys provided by the Whangaparaoa club.

Currently, five New Zealand Rotary clubs are involved; Whangaparaoa, Waitakere, Auckland East, Northcote and Whangarei.

New Zealand's Soap Box Derby Race Director, Terry Clarkson, is really encouraged by the way the competition is developing.

"It gives young people the opportunity to work closely as a team, be competitive and help make a contribution to good causes," Terry said.

Following this year's competition, the Whangaparaoa club also donated \$6500 to Hibiscus Coast Hospice.

"This is now the Rotary Club of Whangaparaoa's major event and I would love to see the Trolley Derby develop

in New Zealand and Australia with more Rotary clubs participating," Terry said. "It would provide the opportunity for many more young people to compete and maybe mount a real challenge to the Americans!"

The All American Soap Box Derby Headquarters was established in 1992 in Akron, Ohio. Each year more than 120 teams from across the US and eight other countries take part in the July championships. Like all things American, the championships are spectacular.

Racing is split into World Championships and the International Category of New Zealand, Alaska, Hawaii, Germany, Japan, Australia, Canada and Panama.

New Zealand has won the International Section three times, last year with 10-year-old Gemma McDougall, New Zealand's first ever female champion. This year Dylan Smith was not successful, but he carries his experience forward to next year.

*For information on how New Zealand and Australian Rotary clubs can be part of the Soap Box Derby Championships email [terry@clarksons.co.nz](mailto:terry@clarksons.co.nz) +64 21 918 980. •*

